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GIBSON ANNOUNCES CRACKDOWN ON WATER DEBTS
LAWSUITS, SHUT-OFFS AND FORECLOSURES TO BE USED

Newark Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson today announced a city-wide crackdown on all delinquent rate-payers. "The City of Newark will not tolerate those who use our services but do not pay their bill. This is the only way to offset the rising costs of water and sewer services," Gibson warned.

"I have ordered new guidelines for enforcement against those who are delinquent. Those who fall behind can expect to face the shutting off of their water service, lawsuits, liens and, in extreme cases, even the loss of their property through foreclosure," said Gibson.

"Newark currently has about \$25 million in overdue bills on its books, of which more than \$20 million is seriously delinquent. Of that total, however, we have already made great progress with the largest single part of the problem, the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority. They have paid all of their current bills since the beginning of this year and are close to an agreement that will permit them to eliminate their past balances," Gibson said.

"Now that we have addressed the problem with the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority, it is time to go after the rest of the delinquent accounts. The vast majority of the arrears are

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owed by only 10 percent of those using Newark water. Most of our citizens pay their bills and this program will insure that those responsible people won't have to carry the cost of those who don't," Gibson said.

"In a few weeks, the City will place liens on all properties who owe more than \$100 for more than six months. About 3000 properties will be affected, about 8 percent of the city's water users. The liens will prevent owners from being able to sell the property without , paying their water bills. Also, liens could be used by the City to foreclose on the property if no payments are made," Gibson warned.

"The City of Newark is intensifying collection efforts to help offset the significant increases in the cost of providing water and sewer services. Sewer treatment alone has jumped over 700 percent since 1970, a rise of more than \$14 million. With the funds I expect this program to generate, the administration will work at stabilizing the rates being charged for water and sewer services," Gibson said.

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